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ABSTRACT

This paper uses sarcastic irony, a la Jonathan Swift in "A Modest Proposal," to create a satirical inquiry into the future demise of community colleges. Beginning with a discouraged, present-day community college professor who is visited by a holographic professor from the future, the paper depicts an educational system completely dominated by technology. This progression towards a computer-run system replacing traditional methods of instruction is described in detail: due to the lack of state funding, the full-time faculty and administrators are replaced by adjunct faculty and program directors; the adjunct faculty, left unregulated, are not necessarily required to possess adequate teaching skills and participate in grade inflation to keep student evaluations high and be rehired; to cut costs, all college ancillary operations are privatized; eventually, schools abandon all pretenses of teaching critical thinking and accept distance learning as a replacement for all functions of the traditional school; and future education is provided by the Internet, with everybody technically able to acquire an education, albeit superficial and incomplete. The paper concludes that technology is not the answer to the intellectual starvation of America's children. (YKH)

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A Modest Projection

A Satirical Inquiry into the Demise of Community Colleges

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In: Issues of Education at Community Colleges:
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I am sure that this must be work of that magician Freston, the one who robbed me of my study and my books, who thus changed the giants into windmills to deprive me of the glory of overcoming them...but his evil arts shall not prevail against this trusty sword of mine. [2]

Late one Friday afternoon in the last year of the millennium this quotation from Miquel de Cervantes' "Adventures of Don Quixote" surged relentlessly through the mind of a very frustrated, seasoned community college professor who sat totally exhausted in a local coffee bar after the last class of the Spring semester. A class that had exhibited a spectacular lack of academic success and interest, the result of poor student academic preparation and being admitted to his course not having completed the appropriate prerequisite courses.

C. Barnstable Chips, Ed. D. , Professor of Rhetoric and Satire, had seen the windmills of educational technology turn countless times in his twenty-five tenured years. For thirty years he had tilted the windmills which automatically realigned themselves with each change in the direction of technology. For thirty years he had been importuned daily to embrace cutting edge pedagogical methods, not one of which had proved to be as effective as the time-tested Socratic method of teaching with its very strong affective domain component. These had been thirty years of little or no sincere and sustained institutional encouragement to his basic intellectual instinct to challenge the giants of his discipline and in doing so lift his students, his long line of squires, off the donkeys on which they presently traveled the world in search of their daily bread onto the unconquerable steeds of ambition.

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[2] "Don Quixote", by Miquel de Cervantes. Part 1, Chapter 8 in which Don Quixote tilts at windmills.

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Popular education, education for the masses, had blindly followed the mechanical model of the technological revolution that had initially supplemented the expenditure of physical effort in man's daily life with machines. Walking had been replaced by the bicycle, then by the automobile. The result was that although man was able to travel greater distances in his life, his natural physical well-being had deteriorated through a lack of physical exercise. The Industrial Revolution had seen the total reversal of the complementing of man's working day efforts with machines to the point where man was no longer the master, the pacesetter but the servant, the runner behind. During this period mankind lost its native intelligence, lost its survival instinct.

The leadership of many academic institutions had sought to first supplement then replace the mental effort on the part of the student with technology. The technology of education shared with the technology of the industrial revolution the propensity to be most productive and hence most attractive when engaged in repetitive, mostly mindless activities. Not unsurprisingly the inevitable happened. While facts and definitions *ad nauseam* were gathered, the unchallenged mind like the unchallenged calf muscle withered leading to the total absence of critical thinking skills, the hallmark of the educated person.

This inherent weakness, the inability to think, to construct a decision-tree and to predict the consequences of many different options had become the greatest obstacle to Professor Chips and his academic cohort as they strove to teach America in a traditional college class-room setting. In Dr. Chips' college the recognition of the level of academic success had regressed by economic necessity to the mere measurement of fact and definition acquisition. A few, at most two dozen, private colleges and universities had hung on to the quaint idea of critical thinking; the components of which reading, analysis, synthesis, creative thinking and writing were considered to be the essential attributes of an education.

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One disturbing outcome of this dichotomy of education was that technically minded people, those who embraced technology, were the one's who increasingly shunned leadership roles in society. The fearsome horse of technology was bred apace but remained riderless. The leadership role in a society which faced a myriad of problems having no clear-cut answers had been assumed in earlier years by many of those from the middle and working classes with a liberal arts education whose reasoning powers went beyond a simple binary-driven universe. In the last two or three decades society had suffered because of the greatly diminished number of liberal arts graduates who instinctively shunned a technology-based education, the only mode of education now offered to the masses. Democracy suffered immeasurable losses as the *Elites*, educated in the traditional classroom setting of prestigious private colleges and universities gained greater proportional leadership in society at the expense of the working and middle classes.

Professor Chips' deep anguish caused him to voice his thoughts aloud such that a holographic stranger sharing the small coffee table could not help over-hearing Dr. Chip's agony. He leaned over to Dr. Chips and said:

"Excuse me Sir, but I couldn't help sensing your distress and the troubles that beset your institution. If I may, I would like to recount what happened at the institution from which I retired in 2010 and how the problems you are facing were solved gradually but relentlessly over the last ten years. It may help to ease your obvious frustration and distress."

Dr. Chips anxious to hear from his fellow educator invited him to continue with his tale, not realizing the obvious ambiguities of present and future time of which the stranger spoke.

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The holographic stranger, looking very relaxed and dressed casually spoke enthusiastically to Dr. Chips ...like you we found that the state was reducing its support still further in real dollars every year, never ever having lived up to its promised fifty percent of tuition costs. At the same time the state unfairly mandated that increases in tuition could be no greater than the inflation rate.

In the late nineties the inflation rate was about 2% hence the opportunity to raise tuition revenues was small. We continued to increase technology fees, the hidden costs, and were even sued several times for charging fees for technological support that was not fully provided.

We attempted to balance the budget using many imaginative approaches, which included downsizing, making positions part-time, and privatizing.

The earliest significant approach involved downsizing the full-time faculty body by not replacing tenured faculty members who retired or who died. Their replacements formed a huge army of part-time adjuncts who were paid considerably less than the full-time faculty. Another approach was to reduce the size of the line administrator ranks by replacing them with program directors who were essentially a form of a hybrid of an administrator and an adjunct faculty member. Several interesting developments arose from this action. The strength of the countervailing force of the faculty union was diminished as the directors were not eligible for membership in the faculty association. In not possessing academic rank the extent of academic freedom exercised by these "at the monarch's pleasure" employees in the institution decreased considerably so much that the academic and viable future of the institution was compromised. Very few of the new academic administrators were hired with academic standing or were subsequently offered tenure. This again reduced the strength of the countervailing opinion, a force so vital when decision-making is made in an autocratic manner at a time when the effects of the forces of change are so

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diverse that they are beyond the comprehension of any single individual no matter how experienced, intelligent or sincere.

For many reasons, mostly economic, we did not monitor the adjuncts very closely After many years and much soul-searching it was finally admitted that the adjunct faculty were in effect independent contractors; persons hired to do "what" but not told "how to do what." This, essentially the privatization of the academic activity, was to be the first such effort in the college.

It should be mentioned that prior to this period there was no question that full-time faculty met the definition of *employees*, academic freedom notwithstanding, by virtue of their assigned courses and an on-going process of evaluation and feed-back through formal evaluations, in-house instructional seminars, faculty development and participation in college committees. The adjuncts on the other hand were different. We recognized that it was physically impossible to visit them in class, enough times per semester, to gauge the level of their performance as this would have taken an army of assistant deans that would have cost as much as the full-time faculty being replaced. Quite frankly we were afraid of what we might find. We could not hear from or judge the adjuncts in college committees which they were not expected to attend. The Adjunct Institute was not always attended by adjuncts and was very general, not discipline specific in nature. Great reliance was placed on student evaluations, which on the whole were very favorable. Sadly when we looked into the matter more deeply, we found that the adjuncts in order to be rehired were very lenient with the students in terms of academic expectations and grading, much more so than the tenured faculty members. Over-achieving students gravitated to the full-time faculty members while many under-achieving and 4.00 GPA obsessed students sought out the adjuncts. It turned out that the adjuncts of the eighties and nineties were not like those of the early sixties, who had been business or career professionals teaching one course to keep in touch with

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academe; rather they were in fact academic gypsies traveling the by-ways of three or four contiguous counties stitching together a full teaching load at two or three different colleges without health benefits or pension plans. It was generally understood but never stated publicly that this academic slave trade was a national disgrace. It was never addressed.

We discovered not unreasonably, that the adjunct gave precisely what he or she earned after a semester or two of showing the flag of effort to be re-hired. We knew this to be exceedingly unfair to the students who were paying relatively costly tuition earned by working thirty or more hours per week, in anticipation of being taught by full-time faculty. Full-time faculty offered office hours and served the students in many ways by serving on college committees, advancing the mission of the college, engaging in ongoing professional development, mentoring, writing letters of recommendation, academic advising and counseling. Adjunct faculty offered none of these services. This was particularly unfortunate as some students took a degree without even having one full-time faculty member.

Our institution became enlightened and considered reversing the trend of two decades by offering tenure track appointments to well-qualified, young graduates. While not requiring academic research publishing as a criteria for obtaining tenure, displaying scholarship in one or more of several approaches to teaching was to be strongly encouraged, supported and expected. The consideration and implementation of this radical reversal in policy was however held in abeyance pending further research and discussion by a committee formed to address the question.

Another approach to balancing the budget enacted in the late eighties and early nineties was the privatizing of all college ancillary operations.

The child-care center was asked to pay market-place rent for its use of the college's facilities. The non-educational community service programs of the college reverted to the YMCA and the Red Cross resulting in

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significant reductions in staffing and building maintenance costs. The very few students who had used these facilities were given reduced cost passes to the YMCA.

The next round of privatizing included the bookstore, the food service, campus security, maintenance and the computer center. The need for the print shop had been eliminated as a result of improved print technology and the extensive use of multi-media technology.

The privatization approach was to put these college operations out for bids with the successful bidder giving the college a steady income stream for the privilege of serving the college. The idea of a fixed income based upon rental income for the space in the college that the private vendor operated and a percentage of the sales each semester was especially attractive to the vice-president of administrative affairs since it reduced one of the perennial challenges of the job.

However privatization did have severe negative academic consequences. The book store in order to meet the ever-increasing annual payment which was based upon the rent for the college property which the book store occupied and a percentage of the annual sales to the students, including food items, raised the price of text-books well-above the new book prices recommended by the text book publishers. Students who sought to escape from the very high costs of new texts purchased used books which were bought back by the book store at rock-bottom prices and then resold at almost the same price as new texts, meaning that the students' savings were small, while the possibility of re-selling a twice-used book was negligible. In many cases new text-books were not offered by the book store so that supply of used books was kept low thus increasing the price of the used books while at the same time reducing the book retailer's payments to the publisher and text-book authors, payments to authors and publishers not being made on second-hand books. Intellectual property lawyers took an interest in this re-sale activity and legislation is pending in Congress to

protect the ongoing interests of intellectual property owners. Low level inventories in the privatized store [occasioned by waiting for second-hand books from other colleges] meant that textbooks frequently arrive one or two weeks into the semester.

It was discovered that the increased burden of textbooks had several effects. We lost students to other institutions that kept book prices in line with national prices. Many students simply did not buy the required text on time or indeed at all so that the academic performance of the individual student and the entire class suffered.

Students were forced to spread their studies over a greater time period; many dropped out of a full-time program to attend part-time. For all students, especially the younger ones, this was extremely costly in that by delaying their entry into a chosen career by two or three years meant that they lost considerable income compounded over the succeeding years. The college came to the conclusion that privatizing the bookstore was extremely shortsighted and did not fit well with its stated mission to serve the citizens of the county. It considered taking the bookstore operation back in the belief that through effective management and lower prices a significant increase in enrollment could be related to this move. This move again was held in abeyance pending more research and discussion by a committee formed to address the question.

The privatizing of the food service brought an annual rental income to the college and a percentage of the food sales. Once again the vice-president for administrative matters was pleased to have a steady source of an increasing annual income.

The academic side saw a downturn however as the caterer sought to cut corners in service and quality. As the foodservice deteriorated members of the full-time support staff chose to go on a diet or to brown bag their lunches, as they did not have time to patronize a local restaurant. This lead to lower revenues for the caterers which in turn resulted in fewer food

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service workers, more delays during lunch time and still more cost-cutting with the result that the food became extremely unappetizing, unimaginative and expensive. A noticeable reduction in support staff productivity in the afternoon due to poor nutrition was observed. At lunchtime there was an almost total disappearance of students who chose to eat at or on the way home; this caused a dramatic decrease in afternoon enrollment. Faculty members chose to go home directly after morning classes rather than eat lunch in the cafeteria and then spend the afternoon working in their offices.

The caterers had insisted on a clause in the contract to provide, at considerable cost, all food other than personal food consumed on the premises. This resulted in a significant decrease in student fund-raising activities with not only the loss of funds for student clubs and the non-profit organizations they were supporting but also a loss of collegial fellowship.

The reduction in food quality was seldom monitored by the senior administrators who had ample excuses to eat off-campus every day.

Research suggested that taking the food service back, even subsidizing it to a modest extent in conjunction with the institution's hospitality program would increase enrollment and improve the general tenor of the institution. This approach was considered but again held in abeyance pending further discussion in a committee formed to address the proposal.

The privatization of the security force also resulted in a great deal of impersonality developing as the minimum wage employees of the security firm felt no loyalty or incentive to learn the culture and to know the personnel of the institution they were guarding that particular day. This had a tangible negative effect on the social environment of the college.

The computer operations at the college, both educational and administrative, were also privatized. The disconnect between the computer company's belief in what it thought were the faculty's academic needs and the needs as seen by the faculty was never even partially resolved. It was

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very much akin to the conflicting views of the care-needer and the care provider of profit-seeking HMO's. It seemed that from the day the private computer company assumed, one hesitates to use the word "control", half the messages on the college's voice and e-mail mail systems were related to computer operations problems. This greatly reduced staff and faculty productivity and increased frustration.

The maintenance at the college, now in the hands of private contractors greatly improved its appearance in that the motive of the very same people who had worked in the college maintenance department was not now to avoid work, but to find work as the more work the contractor undertook, the more his newly hired, ex-college employees earned. The college looked cleaner and more attractive than it had in years when the college budget was consistently balanced by reducing necessary maintenance. It was felt that enrollment increased. A noticeable increase in support staff productivity was observed while the number of sick and personal days taken decreased dramatically.

Attempts were made to sell the seldom-used, almost-new video conferencing facilities that had been rendered obsolete overnight as technology hop-scotched to a point where participants were able to view the presentations in real time over the Internet using their desk or lap top computers. Due to its specific structure it was a white elephant for many years until it was sold as an indoor, in-line skating rink, when it was pointed out that the amphitheatre seating area would make an excellent, Olympic-size obstacle course, in-line skating now being an Olympic sport.

Professor Chips listened attentively as his new friend, who had not introduced himself, paused to sip a Latte Grande before saying:

The members of the Board of Trustees recognizing the gravity of the situation decided, before reversing the privatizing of the teaching activities, the book-store, the food-service, the security, maintenance and computer

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operations, to complete the full circle of privatization and downsizing by following the example of corporate America by considering the privatization, part-timing and downsizing of the administration.

"They didn't tackle that sacred cow, did they?" gasped Chips.

"Yes and No!" replied the stranger.

Interwoven in the folklore of educational management is the firm belief that every problem has its own expert to solve it. The natural inclination is to employ the expert problem solver, so he or she can research, live with and even nourish the problem for the next twenty years. The problem and the expert soon become so fused together that it is often impossible to separate the problem and the expert. In this way not even the severest critic could contend that the problem was not being worked upon.

After hiring a series of in-house experts, the administration at the insistence of the Board of Trustees called in an outside expert, who as we found out later, like most outside experts, had written the first draft of her final report on the plane as she came to our campus for her first visit. After all contemporary educational folklore tells us that there is but one all-purpose solution to all educational problems, take money out of the classroom and use it to hire a director, an in-house expert, to marry the problem, especially when the problem is described in great detail and the solution hinted at in the letter of invitation to the expert.

Recognizing the necessity to maintain the integrity of the hand that fed her, the expert, first sought solutions to the crisis in areas inside the lower echelons of administration. But to her dismay her usual first line solution had been tried; the institution was awash with directors. The directors recalled the behaviour of wild beasts in that they gathered together in physical proximity at the waterhole, the lunch table, for mutual protection but kept an academic distance from each other to preserve their particular programs. This lack of a co-ordinated effort meant that the institution could not rely upon them to collectively address college-wide problems, unlike the

ongoing contributions of the faculty senate. Looking at her second line of attack, outside the administration, she found to her dismay everything external to the administration had been privatized including the use of temporary staffing personal to replace the support staff. The visiting expert was forced to amend her first unpresented draft to include revolutionary things such as having published organizational charts where job descriptions and responsibilities were clear for all to see. She even suggested that the recent proliferation of administrative in-house expert positions could be reversed by changing job titles and descriptions and having the most important activities of different individuals "bundled" in a logical manner to be undertaken by fewer people. Realizing that she was plowing new ground, that her work was valuable intellectual property and hence salable to many Boards of Trustees beyond her present commission she abruptly changed her allegiance by strongly advocating part-time administrative positions, downsizing and even privatizing enrollment, accounting and marketing. The proposal was a masterpiece of managerial economic sense. The expert's philosophy, based upon many years of experience, was to have an administration whose size was realistically designed to serve the demonstrated higher education needs of the area served by the institution rather than having to shake the bushes for additional students in order to support the ever growing administration; a shaking which resulted in enrolling academically poorly prepared students who raised the average cost of educating a student at the institution because of the increased need for remedial classes and a lower retention rate. She recommended that while the college retain its open-door policy it re-direct its limited funds used to provide financial aid/scholarships and remedial support for students with long-term minimal academic performnces to true scholarship support for students with superior academic performances. The administration received and read her report, quickly paid her off and held it for further discussion, this time without a committee. With the external expert's report securely

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under wraps. those who would lose their jobs if it were implemented like anyone in their position prayed for a miracle.

Chips now totally bewildered impatiently asked the stranger. "Did you finally solve your problem?"

" Well we didn't; it solved itself."

The prayer was indeed answered; a miracle occurred and I happy to say that the mission of the college, to educate the citizens of the county is being met in a very effective manner even though the entire college operation progressed beyond down-sizing and indeed no longer exists.

Charlie Chips looked puzzled and demanded an explanation.

"*Technology*. Old Man." the stranger said with a wry smile. "*Technology*."

It all began with two basic propositions.

1. The abandonment of any pretense of teaching critical thinking.
2. The total acceptance of distance learning as the educational technology, that would drastically cut costs, to be the only form of instruction offered in the future. The institution was already offering a degree in English entirely through T-V courses.

But as you know from the Circular Flow of Income concept, what is cost to the buyer is income and employment to the seller. Cut the costs, cut the income and cut the employment. The Iron Law of Economics.

As a result of distance learning in which the student studied at her home at night or at her office during the lunch hour the need for expensive new buildings, bookstore, food service, security and maintenance disappeared over-night. Each student had to have access to a computer at home and at work. The increasingly-expensive investment in ever-changing technology was transferred from the institution to the student.

During the interim period the reduction in faculty, support staff, administration, buildings and other facilities meant that the work of the vice-president of administrative affairs became a part-time contracted-out activity performed by a former dean of business studies who operated out of her home on an as-needed basis, usually two mornings a week schedule. Students paid the college by credit card for each lesson in their courses, which the college initially contracted, from a number of different colleges including the University of Phoenix and textbook publishers. ATT-Small Business Services did all the college's financial work making the college's accounting activities redundant.

The last full-time faculty member retired several years ago and the college was then fully staffed by adjuncts. Students downloaded their packets by e-mail and bought any textbooks from www.amazon.com over the Internet.

A year later a private temporary staffing company, a spin-off of Kelly Girls Inc., established a nationwide web-page which matched adjunct faculty who bid competitively for the opportunity to teach the courses with students who signed up for courses over the INTERNET. Market forces made tuition costs plummet so that Federal and local government financial support was neither needed nor offered. A division of TRW's Consumer Credit Bureau checked faculty credentials with the success/failure profiles of each instructor being measured. Adjunct instructors who were too demanding were never hired again.

This poly-site process, similar to the Thomas Edison College of New Jersey, had its birth in the proliferation of articulation agreements that had originally started within each state of the union but had reached the global scale as educational institutions competed for the diminishing educational dollar, yen and euro.

Naturally the post of college president had evaporated since there were neither college staff to administer nor fund-raising for new buildings

and equipment to be undertaken. During the brief transition period the presidency, strictly a ceremonial post, was assumed by the chairman and only member of the Board of Trustees which has also been down-sized since the county has all but given up on funding an operation that has been essentially privatized and lost its specific identity with the county.

For two years Commencement exercises were held in a local Moose Lodge rented for the occasion with a disc jockey playing Land of Hope and Glory between a nostalgic mix of Frank Sinatra, the Rolling Stones and Aerosmith. At the first of these graduation exercise it was grudgingly admitted that the Commencement with no faculty and administrators present was in reality a gathering of strangers and quite bizarre. The final blow came in the next and last year when the invited guest speaker failed to put in an appearance via satelite-tv. The Commencement speaker was a last minute candidate since it was impossible to find any politician of consequence who wanted to be a virtual graduation speaker. It turned out that the speaker, a distance learning instructor, was suffering from a severe case of depressive-agoraphobia as a result of working in total physical, professional and academic isolation in his home office and teaching some fifteen different courses under fifteen different pseudonyms for fifteen years. It was finally brought to the crisis stage by the realization of having to reveal at least one identity, since he was not qualified in any of the courses he taught. He had only audited them over the Net while having paid experts to assist him as he took his examinations over the Net while staring into the retina identification surveillance system. It was later revealed that he had not been out of his house since being graduated from kindergarten at which time he had been introduced by well-meaning parents to home education on the Internet. His fear of the outside world was so intense that when his parents, who knew of a life outside computers, relocated several times he had to be moved in an upholstered shipping crate to the new house.

This experience caused commencement to be abolished. When the graduating student passed her last examination in her final course, the computer automatically and immediately downloaded her diploma onto her home computer and played Elgar's famous Commencement music. Students who did not have a color printer had to make arrangements to pick a color copy of it up at Kinko's who, for an extra dollar, affixed a gold seal for students who were graduated with honors. Nostalgic students who had started their education before the full-scale substitution of distance-learning for the traditional class-room format could choose to download and play one of ***"the Most Memorable Commencement Speeches of the Twentieth Century,"*** while sharing a Domino's graduation pizza special with their families. For many families this was a most momentous moment when the student emerged from her bedroom/ home office to join her family for a couple of hours until she started studying for her next degree.

The initial introduction of distance learning with the subsequent down-sizing of the administration and the resulting not inconsiderable reduction in the costs of running the institution lead us all to believe that the manner in which the administration introduced distance learning was to be the salvation of the extant county college. Ironically it was this eventual total reduction in the overhead costs of the administration, the support staff and maintenance made it possible for every student to acquire an education through technology, at the same cost that he or she had been paying for tuition prior to the demise of the county college and at no cost whatsoever to the state or county taxpayer.

That was not the end of the story for it soon became apparent that with the exception of the Ivy League colleges and a few other private colleges, all future education was to be offered over the INTERNET by BGU, Bill Gates University, which had assumed majority ownership of the publicly traded University of Phoenix. Gates, through his BGU, was to

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profit immensely from the pioneering activities of the community colleges that had made distance learning a household name and activity.

As expected Bill Gates' wealth increased fifty fold when he offered distance learning on a global scale after the additional acquisition of several text-book publishers that had developed materials for distance instruction and education. TIAA-CREF's propitious investment in Microsoft meant that fifty percent of America's new millionaires were former college professors. To show his appreciation for the pioneering work of the community college and to reduce his corporate income tax payments Mr. Gates created a museum dedicated to the all-too-brief era of the community college at an abandoned community college in a metropolitan area. Many people planned a visit to it when on vacation. Instead Mr. Gates, as he had done with his fine art collection, rendered many virtual images of the campus buildings with hired actors many of whom were former adjunct instructors posing as faculty and students simulating highly interactive and very stimulating lectures. He then converted the campus into one of his retirement home campuses. There would be no Williamsburg of Community College life. This was very unfortunate for it had been determined that one out of every two Americans had taken at least one course at a Community College during the brief history of the Community College Movement. These former students and their grandchildren can still visit the museum via its web-site on two days of the week for a minimal fee with a visit on Sunday before noon being free.

Lest the reader be nostalgic for the passing of the community college, he or she should take comfort in the realization that every organizational entity has to conform to the classic "four stage life cycle" Introduction, growth, maturity and decline. Anguish may only be felt when one is present in close proximity at the decline stage.

The profit potential for the post community college model was so great that a virtual Hall of Fame honoring leading lights of the Community

College movement, mostly administrators with one or two teaching faculty members, was built by a consortium lead by Rupert Murdoch in co-operation with Bell Atlantic and IBM when seeking community and political support in challenging Bill Gates for the educational monopoly.

Later a few charter community colleges staffed by concerned volunteering grandparents emerged to offer lower middle-class students a classical, non-technology-based education. It was suspected that the movement would not amount to much and in being ignored by the politicians and the private sector remained underfunded.

A popular misconception is that there is but one single law of supply and demand; no such law exists. A massive demand for a product, say the old-fashioned Socratic method of teaching and learning, will not automatically say that it will be provided. Absent any significant government subsidy, none or very little will supplied if it costs too much. A few die-hard traditionalists argued that there would always be students who would prefer teachers. They overlooked the fact that kindergarten through high school had converted to distance learning and so the new generation of students had no concept of the Socratic method of education.

It should be noted that every motel-room in Fort Lauderdale still sports a computer and printer and that the famous Spring Break has become an all-year round activity. Every effort was and is still made by the local police forces to strenuously discourage student drinking lest the ensuing serious discussions in the local bars, on the beaches and in the motel rooms create an unwelcome renaissance of critical thinking and all the negative economic ramifications of lecture-driven colleges.

In conclusion, society should be grateful for the last unselfish effort of enlightened administrations that successfully overcame the reluctance of an aging faculty mired in ***"out-of-date"*** methods of teaching and replaced them with technology. This brave, self-sacrificial action meant that every world citizen whether here or abroad who is linked to the INTERNET can

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acquire an education, albeit superficial and incomplete, at a relatively low cost. To-date no assessment of the long-term academic, emotional, psychological and social costs of obtaining an education in virtual isolation has been attempted; nor, it is suspected, will it ever be.

Post scriptum: Having received an insight into the inevitable future of the community college Professor Chips with a rare broad smile confessed to the stranger that he was now going to apply for the terminal sabbatical being offered at his institution and devote himself full-time to perfecting the newly-introduced student model of his fully upholstered, shipping crate with built-in Barcalounger and built-in computer system that is being made from the pieces of the windmills against which he had tilted for so many years.

Author's footnote. The intellectual catalyst for this work was Jonathan Swift's "Modest Proposal" in which Swift expressed his concern for the great number of nutritionally starving children in Ireland at the time of his writing by proposing a totally unacceptable satirical solution to cast a light on the problem. Swift knew that the proposed solution of eating the starving children would never be enacted or come to pass.

This author who has an equal or even greater concern for the intellectual starvation of America's children, believes with much sadness that popular higher education has taken far too many steps along this particular road of no return. The soft-tissues of community colleges, the academic institution born in the sixties, weaned in the seventies, matured in the eighties will be consumed in the first decade of the next century leaving the bones as retirement homes, office parks and other non-educational facilities.

Can the author offer a single word of encouragement? Pragmatically, No!! Rather he offers the observation that since mankind, unlike every other living being on the planet, is a ***"piece of work"*** in

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progress, people of goodwill can, with a sustained and a sufficient interest, guide mankind in its moments of folly. Please keep watching.